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DEMARCO ARCHIVE GOES ONLINE

An ambitious project to open up a unique record of cultural life in Scotland over the last 50 years will reach completion this month, with the launch of the Demarco Digital Archive website on 1st November 2008. The website - www.demarco-archive.ac.uk - will be the culmination of three years' work to establish a digital database of photographs and documents from the archive of Richard Demarco, the celebrated Edinburgh-born artist, gallery director and promoter of the arts. Funded by a grant of £312,000 from the Arts and Humanities Research Council, the project to create online access to around 10,000 items is a collaboration between the School of Fine Art, Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design, the Demarco European Art Foundation and the National Galleries of Scotland. This fascinating material, most of which has not been seen before, will provide a remarkable insight into the history of the visual and performing arts in Scotland from the early 1950s to the present day.

Comprising hundreds of thousands items amassed by Richard Demarco, the archive documents his long career as an artist, collector, exhibition organiser, theatre promoter, educator, and influential advocate for both Scottish and international contemporary art. Born in 1930, Demarco was a co-founder and artistic director of Edinburgh's Traverse Theatre, which opened in 1963. He went on to establish the Richard Demarco Gallery, and between 1966 and 1998 mounted a radical and innovative programme of exhibitions and events, bringing European artists such as Joseph Beuys, Marina Abramovic, Tadeusz Kantor and Blinky Palermo to the UK for the first time.

Strongly internationalist in outlook, Demarco has played a pivotal role in promoting cross-cultural links, organising a series of innovative summer schools and educational journeys, and forging especially strong links with artists, writers, performers and theatre companies from Eastern Europe (in particular Poland, Romania, the former Yugoslavia, Hungary and the Baltic states). He has also used his extensive network of international collaborators to establish connections and create outlets for Scottish artists across Europe and beyond.

In recognition of its unique significance, much of Demarco's document archive covering the period from 1963 to 1995 was acquired by the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art in 1995. The photographic archive is maintained by The Demarco European Art Foundation, established in 1992, which has continued to add a huge range of material of international significance. The creation of the digital archive and website, selected and managed by Duncan of Jordanstone, is seen as a way of opening up the riches of these archives to a wider public.

The larger part of the digital archive comprises photographic images, reflecting Demarco's use of the camera as a documentary and a social tool. His great skill has been to bring together leading artists, thinkers and practitioners from many disciplines and to give them a platform on which they can interact. Having organised and participated in exhibitions, performances, conferences, exchanges, meetings and events of all kinds, he has used his camera to record them all. For the website, photographs have been chosen to reflect the full range of Demarco's activities and to represent the most historically important aspects of his career (such as the landmark performances of Joseph Beuys and Henning Christiansen's *Scottish Symphony: Celtic Kinloch Rannoch* in 1970, and Marina Abramovic's *Rhythm 0* in 1973). Fully searchable and cross-referenced, the website will create an indispensable resource for public use and professional research, and will serve as an introduction and complement to the physical archives. This is a continuing project and information will continue to be added into the future.

Euan McArthur, Project Director at Duncan of Jordanstone said, 'Richard Demarco's work is of great historical importance for Scottish and international contemporary art. There are so few public archives in this field that it is all the more important that we digitise these images to make them publicly available. Making the images available in digital format will give the public and many researchers in contemporary art history access to this unique historical record. Dundee is well placed to do this work with our knowledge of the archive and digital facilities. We are delighted to work with such an important archive.'

Richard Demarco, who was closely involved in the selection of material for the digital archive, said, 'Enduring art originates in the meetings of friends and their shared values and aspirations. I have always believed that the archive was an artwork, and my life's work. This is the justification of that belief.'

Simon Groom, Director of Modern and Contemporary Art, National Galleries of Scotland said 'The Gallery of Modern Art is delighted to be involved in this project. The Demarco Archives hold a wealth of information about the contemporary art scene in Europe from the 1960s to the present day. At a time when Scottish artists feature so strongly on the international stage, it is important that the

pioneering work of Demarco should be recognized and made available to the widest possible audience.'

For further information please contact the National Galleries of Scotland press office on 0131 624 6325/6332/6247/6314 or pressinfo@nationalgalleries.org or the Press Office at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design on

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